



Lewis County Public Health & Social Services

News Release

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Lewis County COVID-19 Contact Tracing Services Enhanced

Chehalis, WA – Lewis County Public Health & Social Services (LCPHSS) has joined a partnership with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Washington National Guard (WNG), and the Mathematica company to enhance COVID-19 contact tracing capabilities and services to Lewis County residents.

Working closely with LCPHSS staff, a team of contact tracing investigators from DOH, WNG, and Mathematica will reach out to every Lewis County resident who receives a positive diagnosis for COVID-19 to request information and guide them through their disease process. This team will also reach out to identified close contacts and provide them with information and assistance. Up until today, all of these phone calls had been made by LCPHSS staff.

LCPHSS Director J.P. Anderson welcomed this new team effort which began on October 7, 2020. “This collaborative effort enhances the level of service and expertise we can provide,” Anderson said. “It allows our team to use our local knowledge to the community’s greatest benefit by letting us focus on positive cases involving schools, congregate living facilities, and employment sites.” Anderson said there is no cost to the county for this additional support.

Contact tracing is a tool used by public health professionals during infectious disease outbreaks. This tool allows public health professionals to learn where the patient may have been exposed, learn who may have the disease before they even know it, and control the spread of the disease through a population.

For Lewis County residents receiving a COVID-19 diagnosis, there should not be a noticeable change in how Public Health responds. When someone is diagnosed with COVID-19, they will be called by a member of this team for a voluntary interview. Caller ID and the callers will identify themselves as being with or from, or calling on behalf of the Department of Health. They will ask if the patient has any

ideas on where they may have been infected, and who they may have been in close contact with after becoming contagious.

Patients will be advised how long to isolate and given suggestions on how to isolate so they won't spread the disease to others. Patients will also receive daily follow-ups throughout the isolation period to check on their symptoms and will be offered connections to needed services.

A close contact of an infected person is defined as someone who has been within six feet, for 15 minutes or longer at any time while the patient may have been infectious. All close contacts identified will be called to let them know they may have been exposed. They will be advised to get tested for COVID-19 if they develop symptoms, and taught how to quarantine themselves to prevent possible disease spread. Contacts are not told the name of the person who may have exposed them to COVID-19 unless that person allows.

Only public health professionals working on contact investigations are allowed to see information about patients or contacts. No personal information will be shared with anyone else. Every patient's and contact's privacy are protected.

"While public participation in contact tracing investigations is voluntary, we strongly encourage people to answer these calls," Anderson said. "It gives us vital information and, even more importantly, gives them access to information and services to ease their way through this disease."

For current information on COVID-19 in Lewis County, follow @LCPHSS on Twitter, <https://www.facebook.com/lcphss/> and visit <https://phsscovid19.lewiscountywa.gov/>

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